



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, April 6, 2017
Florence Ely Nelson Desert Park
8950 E. Pinnacle Peak Road
Scottsdale, AZ 85255**

PRESENT: Bob Frost, Chair; Commissioners Bobby Alpert, Steve Dodd, Con Englehorn, Jace McKeighan, and Cynthia Wenstrom

ABSENT: Mike Milillo, Vice-chair;

STAFF: Bill Murphy, Community Services Director; Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director; Scott Hamilton, Trails Planner; Natural Resources Coordinators Yvonne Massman, Robert Graves, and John Loleit

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Frost Called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

In honor of National Poetry Month, Chairperson Frost, Scottsdale's Poet Laureate, read an original poem entitled *Morning in the McDowells*.

2. ROLL CALL

Members present as noted above.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public who wished to speak.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES (Discussion begins at 5:01)

COMMISSIONER ENGLEHORN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH 2, 2017 MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.

COMMISSIONER WENSTROM SECONDED THE MOTION CARRIED BY A VOTE OF SIX (6) TO ZERO (0). VICE CHAIR MILILLO WAS ABSENT.

5. MCDOWELL SONORAN CONSERVANCY UPDATE (Discussion begins at 5:03)

Mike Nolan said that approximately 250 young people attended Junior Citizen's Science Day, held on March 10th at Lost Dog Trailhead. The final new steward orientation of the season will be Saturday, April 8th. By the end of the season, approximately 142 new stewards will have been trained. Mr. Nolan announced that Jim Stinson will be the new program chair for Patrol;

Phil Pounds is the new program chair for Pathfinding. The annual joint meeting between the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy and the City of Scottsdale is scheduled for Tuesday, May 16, 2017. Mr. Nolan said the new Conservancy website is operational, but that they are expecting there could be some confusion in the process for logging steward hours. The New Steward Recognition Dinner, held March 25, 2017, had 217 people in attendance.

6. TRAILHEAD HOST CONCEPT (Discussion begins at 5:06)

Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, discussed the concept of having trailhead hosts at limited remote trailhead sites along the eastern perimeter of the preserve, who would be onsite 24/7 during our peak season from October through April. The only trailhead sites being considered are Granite Mountain Trailhead, Fraesfield Trailhead, and Tom's Thumb Trailhead. Hosts would be city employees on a contract basis and would be responsible for maintaining restrooms, picking up trash, monitoring the area and reporting any issues to the appropriate authorities. In exchange for their service, hosts would receive water, power, and utility connections for their RV's.

Rand Hubbell, former director of the Maricopa County Parks, talked about his experiences with hosts and the value that they offer. He explained that volunteers are usually retired couples who are personable and able to relate with other hosts and visitors. Hosts educate users, offer the benefit of eyes and ears in the area, and an enhanced level of security.

John Ostmoen spoke about his ten-year experience as a host.

Discussion ensued about the concept of adding hosts to the Scottsdale McDowell Sonoran Preserve and the differences between hosting in the Preserve versus hosting in the county park. Commission members raised questions about installing a permanent host site within the Preserve boundaries and suggested that the City's legal department provide input on the concept. Staff confirmed that the Commission will have several opportunities to further review and explore this concept over the next several months which will all occur before any recommendation on the concept is sent to the City Council. Preserve staff members gave an overview of some issues that are seen in the remote areas of the preserve such as trash, graffiti, and users not following the rules of the Preserve. They explained that while stewards do a great job in these areas, attention given to issues such as trash pickup are inconsistent and stewards cannot be expected to be responsible for certain jobs such as cleaning of restrooms. Mr. Ekblaw explained that if the host program were to move forward, the earliest it could likely begin would be with the FY 2018/19 season at Fraesfield and Granite Reef Mountain Trailhead. Tom's Thumb would take longer because of utility issues. Mr. Hamilton said that in the design process, discreet visibility of hosts would be a primary consideration.

7. STAFF REPORTS (Discussion begins at 5:45; approximately 45 minutes into the meeting)

- **North Area Update/Activities**

John Loleit, Natural Resources Coordinator, said that Saturday, April 8th is Share the Trail Day at Brown's Ranch. City staff and Pathfinders will be out from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. educating trail users on trail etiquette as well as at Tom's Thumb and Gateway offering information on rules and emergency procedures for dogs.

The Dog Poop Flag project started this week. Staff and stewards are placing orange pin flags at locations where dog poop or poop bags are seen in hopes of creating a visual impact on trail users.

Staff and stewards have been working at Granite Mountain to identify spider trails in the area. Once all of the trails are mapped and usage is identified, they will be evaluated for next steps which could include incorporation into the Preserve trail system, or closure and restoration.

Mr. Loleit noted that staff and stewards recently walked along the Tonto National Forest boundary fence line from Stagecoach to 136th Street and noted just two areas where repairs were needed.

Mr. Loleit announced that the City has acquired two official rain gauges that are available for use in the Preserve.

- Cactus Path

Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, gave an update on activities relating to Cactus Path. He reviewed the path options, noting that the neighborhood has requested the path go into the Preserve area as far from residences as possible. When the project was brought before the Commission two years ago, the Commission recommended either using the disturbance area in the eastern section or pushing it south just outside of the Preserve area.

In response to the neighborhood's request to take the path out of the Transportation Master Plan, City Council voted 4-3 to leave it in. Additional information will be forthcoming.

- Trailhead Updates

Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director reviewed activities at the northern trailheads. Fraesfield and Granite Mountain designs are expected to complete the public hearing process by fall. It is anticipated that the projects will be completed within two years.

Staff is offering feedback on the Tom's Thumb schematic site plan and expects to bring details to the Commission during the May meeting. Approximately 100 additional parking stalls should be completed in time for the 2017/18 season.

Design work is starting for Pima/Dynamite. APS has indicated that they do not need access through the median, however, the median break is still being planned for access to temporary parking in the 2017/18 season.

- Trail Updates

Scott Hamilton, Trails Senior Planner, said that Phase 3 trail improvements are coming to completion for this season, including corridors E, H, the eastern half of G, a section of I, and a test section along corridor C. He gave a brief overview of the areas that are in progress, noting that the western half of Corridor G and Corridor J will begin design in the fall, followed by the B, C, and D areas. The City has been working closely with the State Land Department on identifying old trails that crisscross between boundary lines. Contractors will begin removing those old trails next week.

Mr. Hamilton showed photographs of the gabion baskets at Tom's Thumb, noting that City staff and Pathfinders went through a training class on how to maintain them.

Mr. Hamilton reviewed work and trail maintenance that is under way at Tom's Thumb and other trails in the McDowell Mountains.

Mr. Hamilton noted that the power line trail that will provide an alternate access to Cholla and Granite Mountain from Brown's Ranch will be moving forward in early May.

8. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner McKeighan complemented the efforts of the working group and trail builders, especially in Sections E and C.

Chair Frost echoed the compliments, noting his wife especially enjoyed the Tom's Thumb improvements.

9. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS (Discussion begins at 6:13)

Financial Report/Endowment Update
Desert Discovery Center
Commercial Use Policy

Chair Frost suggested that the camp host discussion be agendaized for a follow-up report at a future meeting.

10. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:14 p.m.

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